XVII.

SOBER ADVICE TO CHURCH-WARDENS, IN A LETTER TO A CHURCH-WARDEN IN LONDON,

From his Friend out of the Country,

And may serve indifferently for Constables, and others who are required to make Presentments for not going to their Parish-Churches, & Communicating, &c.

Id Tantum possumus quod Jure possumus.

LONDON,
Printed for *F. Smith* Senior, at the *Elephant* and *Castle*, in *Cornhill*. 1683.

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Kind Friend,

I Received yours, and am heartily sorry to hear of the severity used and intended against Protestant Dissenters, for their Nonconformity; because I am throughly perswaded many of them are sincere and harmless in their Dissent, and give as good Testimony of their being so, as we generally do of our sincerity in our Dissent from Popery; however cannot be condemned to Penalties without Infringment of our Protestant Principles: But since some of our Ecclesiastical Rulers and Judges are not of this mind, but requires by publick charge that all Persons Aged above Sixteen Years, should take the Sacrament now at *Easter*, or to be presented by the Churchwardens or Minister of the place, to be proceeded against by Excommunication, with all its grievous Concomitants and Consequents, whereof perpetual Imprisonment is now in the least. You desire my advice; What you, being sworn Church-warden, should do in this case? You are very loath to have so great a hand in the Ruin of your honest Neighbours for their Conscience towards God, and on the other side you must be true to that Duty, which you have obliged your self before God to perform. You know (my Friend) I am not one of the Learned in the Common nor Civil Laws, and therefore can only tell you what course my self a private Person, willing to keep a good Conscience towards God and towards Men, would do in such a case. And you are pleased to tell me, you therefore desire my advise, because that I being of like condition, and in like circumstances with your self, am more likely to give advice fit for you than they whose education has enured their minds to Subtilties and Quirks of Law. I can easily grant the Reason you give of your Choice to be good, but I cannot allow your application of it to me; for though I am resolved in the power of God to be honest, yet there is another quality wanting to make me a fit adviser in so nice a case, to wit, an understanding well exercised in discerning between good and evil, and things indifferent: But I may remember, you only desire to know my opinion, you do not oblige your self to follow it,

 neither

neither would I have you to do ſo, without better Judgments then I can pretend to, except you find my Reaſons to be convincing.

In the firſt place I am ſorry you have taken the Church-wardens Oath, which obliges you; *to Execute the Office of a Church-warden in your Pariſh for the enſuing Year, according to his Majeſties Laws Eccleſiaſtical*; for its a difficulty ſcarcely to be overcome by the moſt Skilful, to reſolve what Eccleſiaſtical Laws are in force, what not, therefore beyond your capacity, to execute according to what you know not, and give me leave to mind you by the way, that Reaſon, Equity, and Religion requires, that we ſhould never proceed to imputation of Crimes or Executions of Penalties in doubtful Caſes. In matters of favour and benefit we may be liberal, but in matters of hurt and damage to our Neighbour, we ſhould be ſo far from any thing of that nature in a controverted point, that we ſhould not go to the utmoſt the Law allowes, though in a moſt clear Caſe. Now if the Statute of 1 *Edw.* 6. chap. 2. be revived by Repeal of that Statute which Repealed it, the Eccleſiaſtical Perſons ought to uſe the Kings Name and Seal to their Proceſſes, and their holding Courts in their own Names is contrary to Law. However, it is at leaſt doubtful, whether they have any legal Power, and likewiſe whether any of their Canons have any force of Law. If then you make preſentments to thoſe Courts, whereby your Neighbour is vexed and indamaged, you know not but you may therein be injurous to your Neighbour without legal Authority, which no wiſe and conſcientious Man will venture.

But, Secondly, I conceive that a Man choſen Church-warden, may lawfully refuſe that Oath, as being contrary to Law, as may appear by a Statute made in the Thirteenth of this King, chap. 2. and incited in the prohibition for *Waterfield*, where it is enacted *that it ſhall not be lawful for any Arch-Biſhop, Biſhop, Vicar, General Chancellour, Commiſſary, or any other Spiritual or Eccleſiaſtical Judge, Officer, or Miniſter, or any other Perſon having or exerciſing Spiritual or Eccleſiaſtical Juriſdiction, to Tender, Offer, or Adminiſter to any Perſon whatſoever, the Oath uſually called the Oath* ex Officio, *or any other Oath whereby ſuch Perſons to whom the ſame is Tendered or Adminiſtred, may be charged or compelled to confeſs, or accuſe, or purge him or her ſelf of any criminal matter or thing whereby he or ſhe may be liable to Cenſures or Puniſhments.* But I am perſua-

perſwaded that no Man that makes Conſcience of an Oath, but will find himſelf obliged by the Laws Eccleſiaſtical (ſuppoſing all thoſe to be in force which the Official ſays are in force) burdened and compelled to confeſs, or accuſe himſelf of ſome criminal matter or thing, and therefore ſuch Oath ought not to be Adminiſtred to him. However, having taken that Oath, you muſt endeavour to perform it as well as you can without breach of the Laws of God, or Laws of the Land; which latter muſt always give place to the former, and by them be made new or interpreted.

In the next place as to the buſineſs of preſenting thoſe of above Sixteen Years of Age, that come not to the Sacrament at *Eaſter*. Firſt, I ſay it is contrary to Chriſtianity and all civility of Neighbourhood, to preſent a Man as a Criminal, ſo to expoſe him to ſo dreadful a Sentence as Excommunication, and all Calamities that attend it, without firſt diſcourſing their Neighbour to know what he can ſay for himſelf in Vindication; for in this Caſe the preſentment of one or two Church-wardens, is of as much force, and more dangerous conſequence than the preſentment of Twelve or more of the moſt ſubſtantial Men of the County, in civil Caſes, and therefore the leaſt that the Church-warden can do, is to hear what his Neighbour can ſay for himſelf, before he put him into ſo much trouble and danger, as ſuch an accuſation amounts to. For there may be divers lawful and reaſonable Excuſes of a Mans not coming to Church ſuch a Month, or not coming to the Communion at *Eaſter*; as for inſtance, ſuppoſe a Man be Sick and not able to come, or have had buſineſs abroad for One, Two, or Three Months together at the time of *Eaſter*, are not theſe and ſuch like lawful Excuſes? I remember the Statute of *Eliz.* 23. chap. 1. (to retain the Queens Majeſties Subjects in their due obedience) made againſt Papiſts, (but now put in uſe againſt Proteſtants) ſays, *That every Perſon above the Age of Sixteen Years, which ſhall not repair to ſome Church or Chappel, or uſual place of Common-Prayer, but forbearing the ſame contrary to the Tenor of a Statute made in the Firſt Year of Her Majeſties Reign, for Uniformity of Common-Prayer*, &c. *ſhall forfeit*, &c. now that Statute referred to, has this exception in it, (viz.) *Having no lawful or reaſonable*

reaſonable excuſe to be abſent, which plainly ſhews there may be lawful or reaſonable excuſe of being abſent from Church for a Week or Month, and conſequently of not taking the Sacrament Adminiſtred at that time, therefore I conclude the Church-warden or other Officers, who preſent any of his Neighbours as guilty of ſuch a Crime before he have heard what he can ſay for himſelf, is Unjuſt, Unchriſtian, and Unneighbourly; Unjuſt, becauſe the light of Nature will not permit it that any ſhould be condemned unheard; Unchriſtian, becauſe the Law of Chriſt commands us not to Judge leaſt we be Judged, and conſequently Unneighbourly, becauſe ſomewhat more of civility ought to be ſhewed to Chriſtians that are of the ſame Vicinage, then to Men as Men, or to Chriſtians barely as Chriſtians.

Perhaps you will ſay, it is ſufficient for you to ground an Information or Preſentment upon, that in Fact a Man did not come to his Pariſh Church, or did not take the Sacrament there at *Eaſter*, and that if he have any lawful or reaſonable excuſe, he muſt urge it upon his Trial before the Judge or Commiſſary. But Sir, would you be ſo dealt with? Be charged with a Crime that has heavy Penalties attending to it? Be put to the trouble and expence in Defending your ſelf in a Court where ſome Men love none more than their own Souls? When if their Officer would but take the pains to ſpeak with you, you would eaſily Vindicate your ſelf from that charge? Beſides, it is to be conſidered that all Juries, Grand Juries, and others, are choſen out of the Neighbourhood, as being therefore ſuppoſed to know what may be known of the Innocency or Guiltineſs of a Perſon they Accuſe or Condemn, and they are Twelve at leaſt. ſometimes Twenty One of a Grand Inqueſt, that if ſome be Ignorant, others may be knowing in the Matter and Perſon brought before them, and they muſt be honeſt and free, and legal Men, ſuch as the Law in every circumſtance requires, *if there be but One in Twelve*, otherwiſe their proceedings will be null and void.

But

But Sir, Your Presentment, as I have said, hath the validity of the Presentment of a full Grand Inquest upon Oath; Nay more, (except when the Cause of Recusances come before a Grand Inquest) for upon your Presentment the Bishop or his Official concludes your Neighbour Guilty, and will perhaps not admit of his lawful excuses, not as in other Cases, bring Witnesses face to face to prove him Guilty; for you have already convicted him by your Presentment; again, in numerous Parishes, such as you have about *London*, it is impossible for you to know whether every one did Communicate, and therefore you can only say, that so far as you know such a Man or such a Woman did not Communicate, and that shall create your Neighbour no small vexation, though at length he proves that he did Communicate in his own Parish, or in some other Church or allowed Chappel, and that you are mistaken in your sworn Presentments.

But you will now ask me, is it my place to Judge what are lawful or reasonable excuses, must not I leave that to the Ecclesiastical Court, whose Duty it is to determine such matters.

I answer, I have already shewed you that in your Presentment, you are presently both Accuser, Witness, and Jury; So that the Proceedings in that Court are of the Nature of a Plea, after Conviction, as is in another Court brought against the Sentence ready to be passed; for as in a Civil Court the Party found Guilty, is asked what he has to say, why Judgment of Execution should not

pass

pass upon him? So here the Spiritual Judge does but in effect ask a Man what he has to say, why the Penalties of such a Crime should not be Executed upon him? And since you are in a real Sence a Judge, all the Reason of Mankind will oblige you not only to hear, but to determine concerning the circumstances of the Action you are to Judge.

Is it reasonable or consistant with the Liberties of English Men, that a Man should be liable to suffer so great Vexation and Dammage, as the Presentment of the Church-warden puts him to, and the Church-warden not at liberty to Judge of his reasonable Defence against that Vexation? When in a Civil Court for a Crime or Trespass, to the value of a Groat, a Man shall have First Twelve at least of his Sworn Neighbours to pass Judgment upon him; every one of which must be satisfied the Accused Party has no reasonable excuse, that is, every one must be satisfied that there is sufficient Evidence of his Guilt by their own Knowledge, or credible Witnesses, or Oath, and after that the Accused Party and the Witnesses must be heard together, to the satisfaction of Twelve Jurors more, who must every one agree to the Condemnation or else he shall be cleared, but in the Spiritual way of proceeding the business of the First Twelve or Grand Jury, perhaps of Twenty Three, and of Witnesses, is all done by the Church-warden, that's most manifest, and the Verdict of the other Twelve, or Petit Jury is also given by the Church-warden;

Church-warden; and the Spiritual Judge has no more to do but to pass Sentence, as the Civil Judg doth when the Verdict is brought in. * The vast difference between those two ways of Proceeding, shews, that the one is of *Rome*, the other of *England*. But must the Church-warden do the Work of two Juries toward the Ruine of a Man and his Family, and not judge of a man's reasonable Defence against his Sentence?

* For his admonishing Men thrice in a Breath, is in it self a Penal Sentence, being but a Prologue to Excommunication and Imprisonment, especially when things impossible are required; but that's impossible, which a man cannot do without Sin.

Thirdly, If the Church-warden must not judge of lawful or reasonable Excuses, but must present Men, merely because of Omission to take the Sacrament at *Easter*, then how comes it to pass they can dispence with their Obligation of presenting those that notoriously offend in other matters, and even themselves for the most part, if not all of them, to which Presentment they are equally obliged? For by the 109. Canon, supposing them in Force (which is a great Question, or rather out of Question, not being confirmed by any Act of Parliament) they are obliged to present *those that offend their Brethren by manifest Drunkenness, Swearing, Usury, or any other Turpitude or Wickedness*. By the Statute of 1 *Eliz.* ch. 2. *All persons are obliged to endeavour themselves to resort to their Parish Church, or some other place, having no lawful or reasonable Excuse to be absent upon every* Sunday *and Holyday*. Now I perswade my self, that in ordinary; there are but few People, or Church-wardens themselves that are not guilty of the Breach of this Statute most Holydays in the Year. And the Church-wardens know it pettedly: How is it then that they do not present them, except that they either know or presume they have some lawful or reasonable Excuse to be absent; and if they take upon them to judge of reasonable Excuses in this Case, to as to excuse themselves from the Breach of their Oath, why not in other Cases also, and particularly in the case of Communion at *Easter*, wherein they certainly know there may be the like Excuses? And the same Argument will hold in the case of those that come not to Church, &c. in a Month, contrary to the Tenour of this Statute, who are punishable by the Forfeiture of 20 *l.* a Month, by the Statute of 23 of *Eliz.* ch. 1. made against Papists.

Fourthly, This Statute of 1 *Eliz.* makes it not absolutely criminal, *Not to resort to their Parish, or some other Church, but not to endeavour themselves to resort*, &c. Now a man may endeavour to resort, *&c.* tho' he do not perform, being hindered by some lawful or reasonable Lett; * so that a Church-warden that presents a Man for not coming to his Parish Church for a Holyday or a Month, without consulting with him whether he had any reasonable Excuse of being absent, or whether he was not at some other Church or Chappel; and without judging of reasonable Letts, is injurious to his Neighbour beyond the Statute; and if he may not judge of lawful and reasonable Excuses; but must present a man notwithstanding, he makes a false Presentment, because he does not know whether it be true or no that a man did not endeavour to resort to Church, It may be false; and if it be true, it's more than he knows, tho' upon Oath he pretends to know it; so commits Perjury: He swears neither in Truth nor Judgment, nor Righteousness, *Jer.* 4, 2. And why may not a lawful or reasonable Lett come in a Mans way at Easter, as well as at another time? Which if it were so, the Church-warden ought not to conclude him guilty of a wilful omission and therefore ought not to present him.

* Nay, I am well assured, that many who resort not to their Parish Church, *&c.* do endeavour themselves to resort, more by far than those that do: They read, confer, study and pray more for Satisfaction in the Lawfulness of it.

Fifthly, In crimes there is the matter or fact, and the manner or Circumstances of that fact, the matter or fact is for the most part neither good nor evil, but according to Circumstances which make it the one or the other. So under the Law of *Moses*, God commanded to rest on the Sabbath day, but if a man had fallen into a Ditch on the Sabbath it was evil to rest, and not Labour to lift him out, for it was lawful to do so for an Ox or a Sheep, so in our Law, one may kill a Man, and be Innocent when he does it in his own Necessary defence; but if in malice he is guilty of Murder: So to take a Mans Sword from him on the High-way is robbery, if it be done with a Fellonious intent; but to keep a Man from doing himself and others a mischief it is good and lawful: In like manner, he that will present a Man to a Court to be punisht as a prophane Offender, (as the Bishop of *London* speaks in his Order for not coming to Church and receiving the Sacrament at Easter, ought first to be assur'd that he did it with a prophane Mind, and had no lawful or reasonable Lett to excuse him.

Having

Having now, my Friend, shewed you that your Presentment has the force of a Verdict, and therefore you ought to hear what your Neighbour has to say for himself before you bring in the Verdict of your Presentment to the spiritual Judg for him to pass Sentence upon him: Having also clearly proved (as I suppose) that you are to judge of lawful and reasonable Excuses, and that you do it most frequently in other cases: It remains now that I say something of lawful and reasonable Excuses: The first Rule I shall lay down to discern them by shall be general, even that general Rule of our Saviour, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.* If your Neighbour give as good Testimony of his Sincerity in the Christian Religion as you your self, or at least no Cause to the contrary, that which you would have to be judged a reasonable excuse in your own case, that ought you to think in his case. I describe your Neighbour here to be in Appearance an honest and true man, because you are to believe what he says in his own Defence; which if he were a man of ill Fame, you could not reasonably do; but if a man be of as good Credit as your self, or you hear nothing against him, I see not how you can avoid giving the same credit to him you would have another give to your self. (This is to be understood of such causes, as, admit not of outward Evidence besides a man's own Testimony) How otherwise do you love your Neighbour as your self? which the Ap. *James* says is the *Royal Law according to the Scriptures*; and Christian Charity is that which *believeth all things, hopeth all things*; to wit, which he hath no good Grounds to disbelieve and doubt.

I presume then that you and every Church-warden will judge, that Sickness of the Party, or any Relation, whom he or she cannot in duty Wave without great danger, or also journeying in forreinparts about a Mans necessary Occasions, or in our own Countrey about sudden business that will not admit of delay, are reasonable excuses for not presenting ones self and communicating at his Parish-Church at Easter; and there may be many other excuses of the same Nature, which I will not Trouble you to enumerate: But from hence I assume, If the manifest danger of ones Health, or the very probable damage of a Mans worldly Estate, Credit or Liberty, be reasonable excuses to be admitted by the Church-warden; how much more reasonable and to be allowed is that excuse of sinning against God by doing that which he cannot do in Faith or with a perswasion of its lawfulness when divine Authority says, *Whatsoever*

is not of Faith is Sin? For it were better for a Man to lose all his Estate, his Credit, his Liberty, yea and his Life too then sin against God. But he that judgeth any thing required of him to be sinful and doth it, he certainly sins: For he that in the Apostles time eat of those meats, which were lawful to be eaten, judging them to be forbidden, or even doubting whether they were lawful, that Man was guilty of sin and liable to be damn'd for the same. *He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of Faith,* Saith the Apostle *Paul, Rom.* 14. 23. I will grant that it may so fall out that a Man may be so minded that he sins both ways, whether he do that which is required or forbear it; but that is, when he his absolutely oblig'd by God to do it, and he through an Ignorant or ill inform'd conscience thinks it unlawful; but in the case we discourse of, our Bishops and Ministers acknowledge that in the things doubted of, by those that do not frequent their Parish Churches there is no absolute command of God why they should be done, they become a Duty (say they) by Humane Authority, which may be with-drawn, and being with-drawn they are no longer any Mans Duty; now how it comes to be in the power of Christians, to impose upon their Fellow Christians, to do those things which no Law of God or Christ oblige them to, and which their Fellow-Christians account unlawful or doubt of; and to punish them for Disobedience, when their Obedience would be a sin against God, I leave you to determin. But if neither you, nor your Minister, nor yet your Bishop can remove the doubts of these Christians, and if they behave themselves as Christians in Obedience to all things that Christ requireth of them, in Profession of Christian Faith, in Christian Worship and Prayer, in the Celebration of the Lords Supper as they understand Christ to have commanded it, &c. If you will not admit these People to be reasonably excus'd of their absence from their Parish Church, I doubt Christ will not excuse you of injustice and uncharitableness at the great day: I confess, the Prosecution of these People with penalties is not so great a Sin as the Apostle *Paul* caused Christians to commit when his Name was *Saul*, before his Conversion; for he compell'd them to Blaspheme, and sinning against ones own conscience in a matter of Circumstance is not so bad as blaspheming of Christ against ones Conscience; but the same Apostle says in a less case, *When ye sin so against the Brethren and wound their weak Consciences ye Sin against Christ.* 1. *Cor.* 8. 12. now that which your Brother cannot do without Sin, and that which you

cannot

cannot prosecute him for not doing without Sin, should (me thinks) be a reasonable excuse both for him and you.

Obj. You will perhaps urge against what I have said, that there is no other way, but this of presenting them for not coming to Church, to convict Papists of Recusancy; and that they also as well as Protestants may escape upon the pretence of Conscience, so the Laws in these cases provided, be made of no effect.

Ans. To which I answer, that the case of Protestant Dissenters and of Papists is not the same, but far different: For the reason why Papists do not communicate with Protestants in Parish Churches is, Their acknowledgment of a foreign Power and Authority Superior to that of the King and the Laws of the Land, namely, the Authority of the Pope of *Rome*, who is the declared Enemy of the King, and the People being Protestants whence it is that their not coming to Church is an effect and indication of that acknowledgment, and against them were the Statutes of the 1*st*. and 23*d*. of Queen *Elizabeth* made, the last whereof is: *An Act to retain the Queen Majesties Subjects in their due Obedience*, and the Preface gives this as the reason of making that Act, *viz. That diverse ill disposed Persons have practised, by other means than by Bulls to withdraw diverse the Queens Majesties Subjects from their natural Obedience to her Majesty, to obey the usurped Authority of* Rome *and in respect of the same, to perswade great numbers to withdraw their due Obedience to her Majesties Laws established for the due Service of Almighty God.*

For it is observed by the Lord *Coke* in his charge at *Norwich*, and by others, that not any Papists, during the first ten years of that Queens Reign, did refuse to come to Church; that *Cornwallis*, *Beddingfield* and *Eylyard*, were the first Recusants in the beginning of the eleventh year of her Majesties Government: And then Pope *Pius Quintus* being informed by some English Jesuits, that such was the number of Roman Catholicks here, is if he would Excommunicate her, they would presently enter into an open Hostility, with force sufficient to depose and utterly supplant her Highness, and re-establish the Roman faith, whereupon the Pope does Excommunicate her, and Plots with the King of *Spain* to invade her: Then did the Papists withdraw themselves from our Churches: Thus you see it was not Conscience of Duty to Christ as it is in the Protestant Dissenters, who own no Authority on Earth but the King and the Laws; but Veneration to the Autority of the Pope the Queens Enemies and implaceable hatred of all Protestants, that led Papists together

Besides

gether to forſake the Church and their Allegiance, and ſtill continues them Recuſants; ſo that it is the true intent of the Law, that it ſhould be executed againſt Papiſts; upon this Ground it was, that (as I am well informed) a Grand Jury of *Middleſex*, having Preſentments brought againſt ſeveral great Papiſts, would not find the Bill againſt them for not going to Church till the Conſtable or Witneſſes had given Teſtimony that they were commonly reputed to be of the Roman Religion, and that the Clerk had inſerted in the Bill of Indictment, *Pontificiam Religionem Profitentes*, wherein (I judge) they did perſue the true Intent of the Law, in that caſe provided.

If you ſhall ſtill inſiſt, and ſay, that Papiſts do religiouſly give this Authority to the Pope, I anſwer, Firſt, that that Opinion is ſo manifeſtly contrary to *Reaſon* and *Chriſtianity*, that every man that uſes Reaſon, or owns *Chriſt's* Religion, except Papiſts themſelves, muſt condemn it. Think you that a *Mahometan*, or a judicious Heathen, upon a fair Hearing of both Parties, would judge the Pope's Pretenſions to his Infallibility and Supremacy reaſonable, or in the leaſt doubt of their Invalidity? But, Secondly, They that would have Liberty of Religion and *Conſcience*, do not pretend to ſuch that is inconſiſtent with the Sovereignty of Independent States and Kingdoms, in things neceſſary to civil Society; much leſs to ſuch a Liberty as ſhall permit Religious Enemies to cut their Throats whenever they can by Watchfulneſs find an Opportunity? Such is that *Conſcience* which this Objection pleads for, as may appear by what I have ſaid above: And the very thing I am pleading againſt, is, The depriving Men of their Properties and Liberties upon any Pretence whatſoever, ſaving for a *Crime* that's inconſiſtent with common Liberty and Property: But the *Conſciences* of Diſſenters require nothing but a Liberty to that, which if it were not forbid, would be ſo far from being hurtful to the *Commonwealth*, that it would rather be a Vertue, nothing detracting from, but conducing to the *Common Good*. And I hope every honeſt Man will make a difference between thoſe Laws that are neceſſary to the common Good, and thoſe that are made merely for the Pleaſure of the Law-givers; and which others, as wiſe and *Chriſtian* as they would either null or make contraty. Surely the *Conſciences* exercized about the Obedience of theſe two ſorts of Laws, are far different one from another: And that our Penal Laws, ſo far as they

reſpect

reſpect Diſſenters, are of ſuch a Nature, as that they are not now to be preſs'd upon Proteſtants who have the Opinion of the Houſe of *Commons* in the laſt Parliament at *Weſtminſter*, Gentlemen of as good *Credit* for Wiſdom, and Love to Proteſtantiſm, and for Eſtates and Intereſt in their Countries; as perhaps ever was ſeen in *England*; wherein it was reſolved *nemine contradicente*, *That the Perſecution of the Proteſtant Diſſenters upon the penal Laws, is at this time grievous to the Subject, a weakening to the Proteſtant Intereſt, an Encouragement to Popery, and dangerous to the Peace of the Kingdom.* Jan. 10.

And now methinks, Sir, you ſhould have as great Reſpect to the Opinion of the whole Nation of Commons in *Parliament*, as you have to the Opinion of his ſingle Grace, my Lord Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*, from whom this Order for proſecution of Proteſtant Diſſenters by Preſentments, Excommunications, *&c.* iſſues in flat Contradiction to the Opinion now mentioned, eſpecially conſidering withal the Doubtfulneſs of Eccleſiaſtical Juriſdiction and Laws; and all the reſt that I have ſaid and argued in this Caſe, which I preſume may have ſome Influence upon you and any rational honeſt Man. I pray you conſider in the Fear of God, in Honor of Chriſt and his Religion, and in the Love of your Chriſtian Neighbours; and do what ſuch Conſideration ſhall direct you to. Take the ſafer Courſe, which is always the more moderate in penal Matters. Be ſure you act not againſt Conſcience, neither compell others ſo to do.

Your affectionate Friend

and Servant.

April 14.
1683.

FINIS.